

Philadelphia Buddhist Association

Philadelphia, PA

Brief History and Timeline

The First Ten Years

1986 to 1996

Introduction

In the early 1980's there was no functioning American Buddhist group meeting on a regular basis in the Philadelphia Area. The previous Zen Society had stopped meeting. The Philadelphia Buddhist Association began in 1986. It developed a regular program of sitting meditation, twice a week with monthly all day sittings. Monthly lectures on basic Buddhist teaching was added. This core program has continued this program for at least 50 weeks of each year since it began.

The following timeline records the additional events beyond the basic program. Someone notes as to significant events during the first 10 years of operation are included

Now in April 2013, which is our 28th year of programming, we expect a completion of this timeline in the near future.

1986

June 17 – A group of 12 American lay Buddhists who had been meeting occasionally to meditate met to organize the Philadelphia Buddhist Association in the home of Edward Leitz at 97 E. Bells Mills Rd. in Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, PA. This was the first formal meeting of the Association, which established it as a non-profit corporation in the State of Pennsylvania, USA.

Regular meditation meetings each Sunday then began in a private home at 123 Pelham. Road in Germantown, Philadelphia, PA.

Aug. 17 – A talk by Rev. Soho Machida was held on the subject, "Practicing Zen as a Layperson".

1987

Basic Program:

Meditation sessions - Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. 7:30 to 9:10 pm

All Day Retreat - 3rd Saturday of each month, 9 am to 4 pm. (Nov. 21 was the first all day retreat.)

Sutra Study – 1st Sunday of the month, 6:30 to 7:30 pm

January 11 – Professor Donald Swearer a specialist in Southeast Asian Buddhism from the Dept. of Religion of Swarthmore College spoke on "Meditation and Social Action"

November 1987 - A separate building was rented nearby at 138 W. Gorgas Lane. The second floor was rented to a Buddhist couple who were willing to host out of town visitors.

The Rev. Soho Machida was appointed "teacher-in-residence". He introduced *nembutsu* group chanting.

1988

The basic program continued. Buddhist speakers were invited.

Rev. Soho continued regular *nembutsu* chanting with Dharma talks each Sunday. On November 12, the first anniversary of the Association was belatedly celebrated with an open house and potluck dinner.

1987

The basic program continued throughout the year.

Buddhist speakers included Ven. Thubten Pende, an American ordained in the Tibetan Buddhist Gelug tradition.

Jeffrey Hopkins, Ph.D. from the newly established Tibetan Studies program at the University of Virginia visited and gave a talk on a work of the First Panchen Lama of Tibet having to do with advice on living and dying.

The work of the Association was becoming known to other Buddhist Communities. Invitations to the President and Board members to attend events at Korean Buddhist events were offered and accepted. They were the Wongaksa Korean Buddhist Church and the Won Buddhist temple.

U Nu, Former Prime Minister of Burma and his daughter visited us for a week. He was visiting the US doing various speaking engagements. A devout Buddhist who felt the Kalama Sutra held especial significance for all Buddhists.

1988

The basic program continued throughout the year with no interruption

June 25 – At the annual meeting, a group of members decided to form a new group to follow the Rev. Machida to Princeton, New Jersey where he will begin teaching. Bob Rusling, the current president ended his term and joined this group.

1889

Rev. Hsuan Hua, General Abbot of the Gold Mountain Sagely Monastery of San Francisco, visited us. He gave a Dharma talk

Vipassana teacher, Kate Wheeler, a Theravada nun, conducted a retreat on Sunday, Nov. 19th

Nov. 4 – Taviavaat Putarigvivar, a doctoral student at Temple Univ. lectured on teachings of Luanqpor Tean. Ven. Tean has developed a radical form of “dynamic” meditation using rhythmic body movements

The Ven. Thupten Pende returned from Nalanda Monastery in France to conduct workshops and give talks between Dec. 11 and Dec. 17. He made tsa-tsa (small images of Buddhist bodhisattvas).

1990

Basic Schedule is Sunday and Wednesday meditation sessions with an all-day sitting scheduled monthly. Speakers and retreats scheduled periodically.

April - The Association moved to 6 Old Lancaster Road in Merion, Pa. just past the Philadelphia city boundary adjacent to St. Joseph's University.

April 28 – Bhante K. Punnanji, Theravada monk from Toronto spoke on refuge, karma and rebirth.

April 29 – The Association participated in an inter-religious dialogue sponsored by the National Conference of Christian and Jews held at St. Joseph's University. Bhante Punnanji spoke at the conference

In April - Joshua and Diana Cutler, Co-Directors of the Tibetan Learning Center (formerly The Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America) visited to give a talk on their work.

June 9 – A memorial service for Maurine Stuart, Roshi and former head of the Cambridge Buddhist Society was held.

June 10 – Ramesh, a teacher of the Prana Yoga Center in Pottstown and chairman of the psychology department at Neuman College spoke on Pranayama yoga. He is a student of Swami Vignanada, an internationally known teacher of pranayama.

Glen Alexandrin, PhD., Economics Professor at Villanova University and Board member gives talk on Buddhist Economics.

A course in Basic Buddhism from materials from the Buddhist Society of London began. Later this developed into our regular monthly lecture on Buddhist subjects called Introducing Buddhism

May -Fourth Annual Meeting was held

July – Yearly planning retreats for the Association were instituted

August 12 – A Benefit Concert with Ronie Nyogetsu Seldin playing the Shakuhachi flute.

Oct. 24 – Mahinde Delanerolle of Shri Lanken Buddhist descent, a lawyer and teacher at Temple University shares his Buddhist experience

Nov. 14 – Lawrence Bale, an American who spent an extended time in a Thai monastery as a monk speaks as a lay Buddhist engaged in the problems of today's life.

Dec. 31 – First year of New Year's Eve meditation sitting followed by end of year celebration.

1991

Jan 2 – Barbara Alexandrin spoke on “Basic Buddhism – The Middle Way”.

Jan 19 and 20 – Thubten Pende held a workshop/retreat on Wisdom Energy

Feb. 16 – John Myrdhin Reynolds spoke on Self Liberation and Dzogchen Meditation

In May, many of our members attended an event with Thich Nhat Hahn in Philadelphia

June 9 – Annual Meeting – Our long time treasurer, Walt Lyons, leaves to form the Buddhist Sangha of South Jersey in Cherry Hill, NJ.

July 13 and 14- Thubten Chodron, an American ordained in the Tibetan tradition as a nun and teacher gave teachings. She went on to found the Sravasti Abbey in Newport, Washington.

Swami Vijnananda visited PBA and spoke on Yoga and Buddhism

Aug. 18 – Members attended the Annual Festival to Maitreya at the Tibetan Learning Center, Washington, NJ.

Sep 14 and 15 – John Reynolds Seminar on Dzogchen meditation in the Tibetan and Bon-Po traditions.

Oct. 6 – Eishin Ikeda, Soto Zen Monk came from the Boston area to lead meditation

Oct. 9 – Kovit Kehmananda, Thai Poet, Artist and Buddhist practitioner visits and leads meditation session.

Oct. 12 – Saturday all-day meditation led by Do Mun Sunim, Abbot of the Cambridge Zen Center

Oct. 19 and 20 – Zen Meditation Workshop was conducted by the Rev. Dai En Bennage at a retreat center near Pottstown (sponsored by PBA)

Nov. 16 and 17 – Zen Meditation Workshop conducted by the Rev. Dai En Bennage at a retreat center near Pottstown (sponsored by PBA)

1992

May 3 – PBA participates in an Inter-religious dialogue of the National Conference of Christian and Jews at Chestnut Hill College.

May 24 and 25 – Rev. Eishin Ikeda, Soto Monk teaches and holds meditation sessions.

June 14 – Rev. Bokin Kim of the Won Buddhist tradition gives talk and leads meditation.

June 17 – Carol Lee Parker-Fleck holds workshop on self-massage and chi kung techniques to aid meditation practice.

Sep – The new monthly Introducing Buddhism lecture series begins.

Sep. 12 and 13 – Tai Chi / Buddhist meditation weekend. 10 am to 2 pm each day

Sep 23 – George Cherinoff (Gelong Thubten Tsultrim) of the Tibetan Milarepa Center– talk on “The Two Truths”.

1992 continued

Oct. 14 – Sensei Kaye of Kannon Do, a Los Alamos, New Mexico, Zen Study Group leads meditation.

Oct. 18 – All day seminar by John Brzstoski. 10-12 Noon on Fundamentals of Mahayana Tibetan Buddhist Meditation. 2-4pm on Tibetan Buddhist Iconography.

Oct. 21 – Dr. Stunkard gives talk “Reflections on Zen”

Oct. 28 – Rev. Dai En Bennage, Soto Zen priest who trained in Japan for 22 years gives talk on Mt. Equity Zen.

Nov. 14 and 15 – Bonpo Master Lama Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche gives teaching on Tibetan Dzogchen form of meditation.

Dec. 16 – Ven. Chung Hea Sunim of the Korean Wongaksa Temple in East Oak Lane gave a talk and led meditation.

Dec. 31 – New Year’s celebration, ringing of great gong and casting of I Ching.

1993

Jan 2 – Bokin Kim of the Won Buddhist Temple gives New Year talk and leads meditation

Jan. 13 – Ordained Tibetan monk George Cherinoff returns to give talk and lead meditation

Jan. 30 – Thubten Pende returns to talk on the Buddhist Path

Feb 17 – Professor Asok Gangaden of the Dept. of Philosophy, Haverford College speaks on “The Dhammapada: an experimental encounter”

Feb 27 and 28 – Glenn H. Mullin, Canadian translator of Tibetan texts leads a two-day seminar on Training the Mind in the Great Way.

July 16 – PBA participates in O-Bon (Buddhist Memorial Day) at the Japanese House in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia.

Sep 25 - John Reynolds seminar on the Core Teaching of Buddhism in the Theravada, Mahayana, Zen and Dzogchen traditions

Sep 26 – John Reynolds seminar on Buddhism, God and Religion: Visualization in Christianity and Tantra.

Oct. 13 – Art D’Adamo. MA, talk on No-Self: A New Way of Looking at it.

Oct. 23 – Nimr Hasan, Grand Master of t Kosho Shorei Kempa led workshop on developing concepts and methods of meditation for those having trouble with sitting still meditation.

Nov. 14 – John Brzstowski talk on Tibetan Art, Iconography and Vajrayana visualization.

Nov. 17 – Participation in the local meeting of the National Conference of Christian and Jews.

Nov. 20 – Benefit concert with Ronie Selden playing the Shakuhachi Japanese flute.

Nov. 15 – Kenneth Kraft, PhD, former president of PBA and professor at Lehigh University talking on Recent Developments in Socially Engaged Buddhism.

Nov. 23 – Professor Zhenghui Zhu of Shanghai University speaking on “The Buddhist Tradition during the T’ang Dynasty, 618-906 CE”. PBA was one of his sponsors for his American tour.

1993 continued

Dec. 22 – Dai En Bennage talk “Primer on Soto Zen Buddhism”

Dec. 31 – Annual New Year’s Eve celebration and sitting meditation.

1994

This year we added a monthly video tape on a subject of interest to Buddhists after the meditation period on the 3rd Wednesday

Jan. 22 and Jan 24 – Dai En Bennage, Dharma Talks and Meditation Weekend

Mar 13 - Rev. Eishin Ikeda returns from Massachusetts for a day of Dharma talk and meditation

Mar 16 – Round Table discussion on Why We Follow the Buddha’s Path.

Mar. 20 – PBA joins the annual conference of the National Conference of Christians and Jews at Rosemont College.

Mar. 22 – Student Night – Special Program to introduce local College Students to Buddhist Ideas and Practice

Mar. 26 – John Brzstoski presents Slides of Tibet from his five trips to Tibet

Mar. 27 - John Brzstoski presentation on the Lotus Sutra and discussion on the Tibetan Mantra Tradition

April 19 – Student Night

Apr 22 – Potluck dinner and discussion on the Role of the Monitor with Dai En Bennage

Apr 23 and Apr. 24 – Two day sesshin and memorial for PBA president, Barbara Alexandrin with Dai En Bennage.

May 7 - Ven. Thubten Dondrob (Neil Huston), Director on Nalanda Monastery in France. Topic was The Search for Freedom: Theory and Practice of Tibetan Buddhism.

May 8 - Ven. Thubten Dondrob, Compassion and Skillful Means in Daily Life

Jun 12 – Annual Meeting

July 15 – PBA participates in Obon festival – An Evening of Zazen Commemorating our Deceased at the Japanese House in Fairmount Park with Dai En Bennage

Sep 21 – After meditation, a video tape on “Tibetan Medicine: A Buddhist Approach to Healing

Nov. 16 – After meditation, a video tape “Journey to Mustang (Nepal)”

Nov 19 and Nov 20 – Bhante Gunaratana, PhD, President of the Bhavana Society and former Buddhist Chaplain of American University. Two day Vipassana Meditation and Teaching

Dec 31 – Annual New Year’s Eve sitting meditation and celebration.

1995

Basic programing continued this year with regular twice weekly sittings and monthly days of retreat and public lectures.

This year we went “on-line” in November with a web page and email access, enabled by our vice-president, Paul McCarthy

Feb. 13 – Rev. Bokin Kim gives talk and video tape about Won Buddhism

May 23 – Student night to introduce local college students to Buddhist ideas.

June 23 and 24 – Sister Sucinta of the Bhavana Society holds a two-day meditation retreat.

July 15 – Dai En Bennage holds teaching and meditation from 10 to 4 pm. Extremely high temperatures caused us to hold the meeting at nearby St. Joseph’s college in air-conditioned space. This was arranged for us by Professor David Carpenter of the University.

A memorial service for Barbara Alexandrin, former president. was held prior to the program.

Sep. 23 – Members of the Association were invited to the dedication of the Won Buddhist Temple

Sep. 30 – Glenn Mullin – Workshop on “Meditation: Guidelines for Inner Empowerment”

Oct. 1 – Glenn Mullin – Workshop on “Meditation for Healing and Balance.”

Nov. 19 – Sylvia Boorstein, Buddhist teacher and author gave an evening talk after having spent the day at a local event called “The Jew in the Lotus” at the Germantown Jewish Center.

Dec. 31 – New Year’s Eve sitting meditation and celebration.

1996

This was our tenth year of being available to the Philadelphia Community

Jan 6 and 7 – Bhante Henapola Gunaratana held a two-day weekend teaching and meditation practice on Insight or Mindfulness meditation.

On the second day the event was ended at noon as the East Coast was being hit with a “once in a century” snow storm resulting in 36 inches of snow in the Philadelphia area.

Travel of any kind was nearly impossible for 4 days afterwards.

June 9 – Tenth Year Annual meeting with dinner at a local Chinese restaurant.

June 15 – Monthly Meditation Retreat on the 3rd Saturday was dedicated to the ongoing work of The Philadelphia Buddhist Association.

June 23 – Family picnic at Saunders Woods with potluck buffet, children’s activities, martial arts demonstration, Shakuhachi flute player and walking meditation in the fields accompanied by a great Buddhist gong.

Richard McKinney prepared this 10-year timeline in April 2013.
All errors or omissions are his with apologies.